NEW SERIAL—"THE OUTLAWS OF THE AIR"

(By GEORGE GRIFFITH, Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," and "The Syren of the Skies.")

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 299.—Vol. XI. FOR WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 22, 1894. [Price One Penny.

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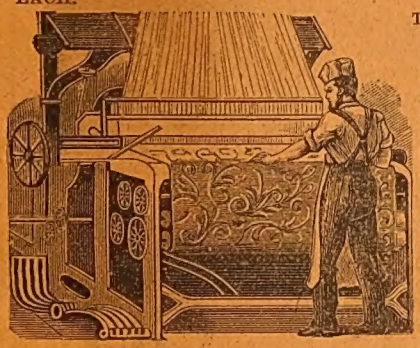

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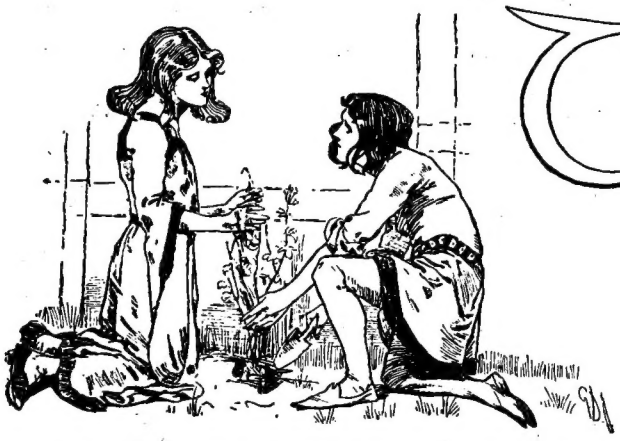

The Kaiser's Tree

IT was in the year of grace, 1511. Two men were crossing the turf of the quiet Minster Square in Breisach; one was somewhat advanced in years, with fine, aquiline nose, full blonde beard verging on grey, and long hair that escaped in heavy locks from under a red velvet *berretta*. He walked with so majestic a tread that it was very evident he was no common man, but one on whose broad shoulders rested an invisible world. Handsome, tall and noble, he was indeed a King among men—a Kaiser—a German Kaiser from crown to toe; a poet too, he was, and a hero in the true sense of the word—Anastasius Grün's "Last Knight," Maximilian I.

Here in Breisach—*his* city as he called it—the Kaiser escaped from all affairs of State, and here he wrote those tender letters to his daughter Margaret, in the Netherlands. But in 1511 threatening clouds hung low and shadowed the Kaiser's brow, for they presaged a storm that was to carry him away for ever from the quiet spot of earth he loved so well. His eyes swept sadly over the bright landscape that lay at his feet; and suddenly turning to his companion he asked:

"Whose children are those?" pointing as he spoke to a niche in the wall, where a boy and girl knelt and with great industry were planting a rose-bush. The girl was about eight years old, and the boy some four years her senior, and so absorbed were they in their work that they did not hear the Kaiser's approach. When he stood beside them the boy looked up and exclaimed:

"Why, it is the Kaiser!"

"What are you doing there?" asked Maximilian, his artistic eye feeding the while upon the charming little pair.

"We are planting a rose-tree to the dear God," said the lad fearlessly.

"And do you think the dear God will be much pleased?"

"It is the best we have," he said, shrugging his shoulders.

The Kaiser smiled, as he asked: "What is your name?"

"Hans Liefrink."

"And is the little girl your sister?"

"No, she is our little neighbour, Councillor Ruppacher's Mailie."

"Ah, indeed! And you love each other very much?"

"Yes, when I grow up—and have a knife—I am going to marry her." The Kaiser looked astonished.

"Must you have a knife to get married?"

"Yes, certainly," answered the lad. "Without a knife I cannot cut, and if I cannot cut I cannot earn money, and I must have a great deal to marry Mailie, because she is a Councillor's daughter."

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"But what will you cut?" the Kaiser inquired.

"I will cut wood."

"Ah, I understand now, you want to be a woodcarver. Was that your father's art?"

"Yes. When I was little I watched him carve, and now I want to learn myself; but father is dead, and mother cannot buy me a knife."

"Will this do?" And the Kaiser drew a magnificent many-bladed one from his pocket.

The hot colour rushed into the boy's face, and one could almost see his heart beat with joy through the coarse, torn shirt.

"Yes, yes," he stammered; "it is splendid!"

"It is yours; be diligent with it," said the Kaiser.

Hans took it timidly. "Thank you very, very much," was all he could say, but a bright fire glowed in the dark eyes that showered sparks of love and gratitude upon the Kaiser.

"Now you can go to Nuremberg."

"I should love to go there to Dürer's, for I will never carve plates. I can't bear such flat work; I mean to carve figures that are natural, and that one can take hold of."

"The genuine sculptor!" exclaimed the Kaiser. "You are right, Hans Liefrink; hold to what is natural, and you will never fail." He drew a leathern purse from his doublet, and handing it to the lad, said: "Only have patience, Hans; keep these *guldens* until you are old enough to travel, then go to Dürer and tell him that as his Kaiser once held the ladder for him, so shall he hold it now for you to mount as high as he. Will you promise me all this?"

"Yes, dear Herr Kaiser," cried Hans enthusiastically, and he took the Kaiser's hand and kissed it in his sudden joy. "If I ever carve the dear God," he exclaimed, "I will make him look just like you."

"Farewell," laughed the Kaiser, as he strode down the mountain with his companion.

The boy stood as in a dream, while Mailie chewed a hole in her apron. A maid came in search of her, and to her Mailie told the story of the Kaiser and the knife. It soon became the gossip of all Breisach. "Hans Liefrink was such a bold fellow; it was no marvel that he should have been prattling to the Kaiser," and everyone wanted to see the wonderful knife and the contents of the leathern purse. But the latter Hans was prudent enough to show to no one.

Years passed. Hans Liefrink lost his mother—Mailie hers, and the orphaned children were drawn closer together. In the

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evening, after work, Hans would break through the hedge that separated the gardens, and would carve lovely figures for Mailie, such as no child in all Breisach possessed; and she listened in open-eyed wonder and admiration while he told her of the wonderful pictures and wood-carvings he had seen in the Freiburg Cathedral. Whenever they could they ran up to the Minster and watered the rose-tree—the "Kaiser's tree," Hans had named it—and there they loved to linger, hoping always that their kind friend might come again. Often they called aloud: "Herr Kaiser, dear Herr Kaiser, come again"; but the childish voices echoed and re-echoed in vain under the blue sky—and the Kaiser came no more.

The little ones grew up, and the "Kaiser's tree" grew with them, and they seemed more and more drawn to it and to each other, as though its tender roots had reached out silver threads of love into each heart, and bound them close with ties that held them fast. But, alas! this one true friend was not strong enough to hold together what men would keep apart.

The lovely, stately *Ruppacherin*, the Councillor's daughter, dared no longer be friendly with the poor wood-carver; her father strongly forbade it, and put a high wall between the two gardens, so that Hans and Mailie lost all chance of meeting, save at the "Kaiser's tree," and here, but rarely, when the Minster was deserted.

But this only made the stream of love that coursed in their hearts overflow their lips; and one evening when Mailie had long been absent from the "Kaiser's tree," Hans sang his first love song under her window that overlooked the little garden:

"My heart is mine no longer,
'Tis stolen quite away
By a maiden, sweet and lovely,
Who listens to my lay.

"There grows a slender rose-tree
Within the Minster's shade,
And underneath its branches,
A sign of love is laid."

Early the next morning Mailie came to the rose-tree, and found a tiny golden heart hidden in the moist grass; she listened with sparkling eyes and burning cheeks to Hans' words of love, and laid the tiny golden heart on her own fast-beating one, and swore never to let it go, while Hans, half mad with joy, cried: "Ah, if only the Kaiser would come now"—but the Kaiser came no more.

The autumn passed, winter came, and the young people saw each other more rarely than ever, but Hans often sang the "Song of the Rose Tree," and many another, all telling of his love for Mailie, till at last her father noticed it and threatened her with his curse if she did not stop all intercourse with the "good-for-nothing artist."

So one day Hans and Mailie stood for the last time beside the rose tree they had planted many years before. Mailie had told Hans of her father's threat, and now she stood silent, her hand resting in his, while tears coursed slowly down her cheeks.

"Mailie, tell me that *you* do not think me such a worthless fellow."

Her blue eyes looked full into his brown ones, and a smile of love and trust crept over her face.

"No, Hans, indeed I do not; no one shall ever make me think that. They do not know you as I do; you have taught me all that I know that is great and beautiful; you have moulded me and made me what I am, even as your artist-hand forms an image from a shapeless piece of wood," and she took his strong hand and pressed it to her soft, warm lips, then folded her white fingers over his brown ones and added: "I will believe in you always, for you honour God with your art, and whoever does that cannot be evil."

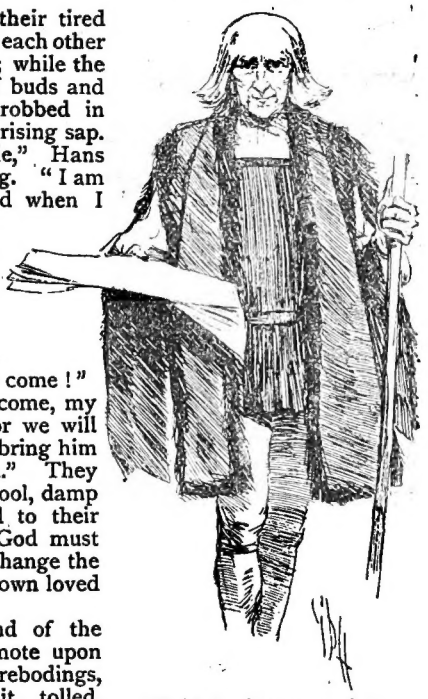
"And will you be true to me, Mailie, till I have brought my art and myself to honour, and till I come back to claim you for my bride?"

"Yes, Hans, I will never leave my father's house but to go to you—or to the cloister. And if I should die before you come, I will ask them to bury me here, under the Kaiser's tree, where we have been so happy. Then, if you come back and lie here in the sunshine to rest you from your toil and sorrow, every rose-leaf that falls on you shall be a kiss from me," and she wept on his breast, their tired hearts beating against each other in the pain of parting; while the promise of spring—of buds and roses—pulsed and throbbed in the rose-tree with the rising sap.

"Don't cry, Mailie," Hans said, trying to be strong. "I am going to Dürer's, and when I have learned to do something of worth, I will seek the Kaiser and ask him to use his influence with your father."

"Oh, yes, if the dear Kaiser would but come!"

"He will certainly come, my love," said Hans, "for we will pray the good God to bring him to us—or me to him." They knelt together in the cool, damp grass, and it seemed to their trusting hearts that God must work a miracle and change the Kaiser's tree into his own loved presence.



The kindly old messenger left.

Suddenly the sound of the great Minster bell smote upon their ears—full of forebodings, mournfully, slowly it tolled. People began to climb the hill that led to the church, and Hans ran to them with eager inquiry.

"Where have you been?" they said, "Have you not heard that our Kaiser is dead?"

The Kaiser dead! Poor Hans stood as if turned to stone. Where were all his hopes? He rested his burning brow against the cool stem of the rose-tree and groaned aloud.

The knell ceased, and all nature was so still and dead, it seemed as though spring and life could never come again. A light hand rested on his bowed head; Mailie had come to be his comforter.

"Oh, Mailie, the Kaiser will never come again!"

"But God is with us," said Mailie softly. As she stood before Hans in her maiden purity and beauty, the light of inspiration overspread his face, and he whispered low:

"Mailie, God is truly with us. He shows me now—as in a vision—the Queen of Heaven surrounded by holy angels, and if I can but carve all that He shows me, I shall be great myself and need a Kaiser's help no longer."

Next morning at daybreak Hans set out. As he passed Ruppacher's house loud and clear his voice rang out:

"My heart is mine no longer,
'Tis stolen quite away——"

Softly one of the lower windows was raised and a white handkerchief waved a last farewell through the dusky light; the song went on, but the voice grew trembling and uncertain—full of unshed tears—then ceased, and all was silent once more.

Years passed and nothing was heard of Hans Liefrink, and no one thought of him, save Mailie, in whose gentle, loving heart he was ever present and ever dear, and who watched for him till at last hope was almost dead, and the roses faded in her cheeks, and a dumb sorrow looked out of the sweet blue eyes.

Her one pleasure was the care of the little rose-tree, and tenderly she watered it each day and saw with loving pride that it repaid her care, for it grew stronger and taller till it reached the very top of the niche where it was planted, then fain would go beyond, but she bent its budding top and bound it fast within the niche. She could do her work without hindrance from her father, for he was buried deep in political matters brought about by the Reformation, and paid but little heed to his daughter.

Breisach was trembling much for its old faith, and Duke Ferdinand, Kaiser Maximilian's nephew and successor,

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counselled her children to do all they could to strengthen the Catholic faith, by means of votive offerings and ideal paintings and sculptures in their churches. The Minster had long lacked a high altar worthy of it; and notices were sent broadcast bidding all German artists to send in their best plans, that the best might be chosen and the work began.

Mailie heard but little of all this, for she never went among the people, and lived alone in her little bay-windowed room, waiting for Hans to come. But she was growing weak and weary with waiting, and the eyes she turned toward the Christ that Hans had carved for her were often full of tears. Five long years had passed since she had seen him, when one evening—.

"There grows a slender rose-tree
Within the Minster's shade,"

echoed softly as a summer zephyr under her window. She sprang to the casement and looked out, but could see no one in the darkness. Love lent wings to her feet, and like an escaped bird she flew up the mountain-side to the Kaiser's tree, where two strong arms clasped her and held her close, while her head swam, and it seemed as if the waters of the Rhine were closing in about her. They held each other long in silent embrace, for true love needs no words to tell its depths. Hans was the first to speak.

"How pale you are, sweetheart; are you ill?"

She shook her head with a happy laugh. "Oh, no; not now. But you were gone so long. Why did you not come sooner?"

"I could not, little one. If I had come back a poor, unknown fellow, your father would have dismissed me again. So I stayed and feasted my eyes on all the art treasures of the great cities, and worked in Dürer's studio till my name was mentioned with honour among his pupils, and I said to myself, 'Now you may woo the lovely Mailie.' And when I heard there was to be a new altar put in our Minster, I hastened here to make application, and, if I am found worthy to do the work, what can your father have against me then?"

Mailie shook her head doubtfully, but Hans was full of joy.

"How the Kaiser's tree has grown!" he cried, in wonder; "it seems to have taken all the warm blood out of your cheeks, its roses are so red. Give my love's roses back to her," he said, playfully brushing her cheek with a flower, but they were pale and white. "That is not good paint; let us try this," and he pressed a kiss on her cheek. "Ay, that is better," he laughed, and laid her blushing face against his breast. "Bloom out, my little rose; the spring is almost here."

The next morning the usher of the high-gabled town hall came into the Council Chamber with hesitating steps.

"Your honourable body will be graciously pleased to pardon, but there is one without who insists upon coming into your presence."

"Who is it?" asked the Burgomaster.

"It is Hans Liefrink," said the usher, "but so much changed I hardly knew him. He wants to compete for the new altar, and submit his plans."

"What have we to do with such a scrapegrace as he? Let him go back where he came from," was the decision. "We want no such bunglers as he."

The kindly old messenger left the room with a somewhat crestfallen air, but returned almost immediately, bringing a paper of draughtings with him, which he presented with many bows and apologies.

"Liefrink begs you will examine these, your worship, and you can inquire of Dürer, in Nuremberg, as to his ability."

"If the fellow don't take himself off we will have the jailor after him," cried Ruppacher in a rage.

"Softly, softly, Master Ruppacher, the draught represents the coming of the Mother of God in Heaven, and is right fancifully thought out, it seems to me."

"But to imagine a thing is much easier than to do it. Liefrink never could do such a thing," said one of the Councillors. "Besides, it was simply ridiculous to give such a work into the hands of a Breisacher child, whom some had even looked askance upon." So Hans was summarily dismissed.

The authorities finally decided to send their plans to Albrecht Dürer and to let him be their judge; and, at the same time, with the letter from the Council went a letter from Hans to his great teacher and good friend.

Weeks slipped by in alternate anxiety and sweet stolen happiness for the lovers; they met as formerly at the Kaiser's tree, for the struggles of 1524 drew Ruppacher's attention from his daughter, and Mailie grew bright and rosy in this spring-time of love. At last Dürer's answer came; but who can describe the amazement of the Council when it was found that the letter contained Hans Liefrink's despised plan and these words: "I can recommend nothing more beautiful than this plan of my friend and pupil, Hans Liefrink, whose ability to execute it I fully guarantee."

Half-an-hour later a crowd of people pressed up to the narrow street and stopped before Hans Liefrink's little house. He came to the door, and, to his astonishment, saw a deputation from the Council, one of whom stepped up and told him with great pomp that his plan had been approved by Dürer, and he had been chosen by the Council to execute the high altar for the Minster.

Hans almost shouted for joy. Was it really true, or only a beautiful dream! When the deputation had departed he hastened over to Ruppacher's, for this was his time to speak.

Mailie opened the door for him—a low cry of happy fright, a quick kiss—and she disappeared into her own room, where, with beating heart, she sank before her crucifix and implored the Blessed Virgin's help. Hans stepped fearlessly into Ruppacher's presence, who cried with flaming eyes:

"What do you want?"

"Herr Ruppacher, I know an honest man who loves your daughter and who would marry her, and I want to bring him to you."

"So——and who may he be?"

"Myself, Herr Councillor."

"You! Did anyone ever hear such impudence. The beggar dares——"

"Herr Councillor," Hans cried out, "I never was a beggar. My father was poor, but he supported us with his wood-carving, and after his death my mother took care of herself and me by the honest labour of her hands. The only things I ever received in my life were the knife and the purse from Kaiser Max, and those I did not beg—he gave them to a poor boy in whom he recognised an aspiration for better things. I have worked hard with the knife and educated myself with the money, and both have yielded me good interest. I am no beggar, Herr Councillor, and for

"Carve an altar that is higher than the church in which it stands, and you shall have my daughter."

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the next two years the commission I have just received will enable me to abundantly provide for a wife."

"Two years, and what then?" sneered Ruppacher.

"Then new commissions will come!"

"Oh, you think you are something fine, no doubt, but you belong to a race of star-gazers and loafers, who do nothing but spin dreams and are too lazy to work."

Hans was burning with indignation, but he controlled himself for Mailie's sake, and only said:

"A Kaiser held the ladder for Albrecht Dürer—the ladder on which he painted—and a town councillor of Breisach, whose dust will soon be scattered to the winds, insults his best-loved pupil. There, I tasted all the honour of my reputation; here, I must be insulted and trampled upon!"

"Then go back to your honour. Why did you come here with your silly art?"

"Because I love your daughter so truly that no sacrifice is too great to be made for her; and because I want her for my wife."

"Well, then, I will tell you that you are as likely to marry a wife as far above you as my daughter is, as you are to build an altar in the Minster higher than the Minster itself."

"Is that all you have to say, Herr Councillor?"

He laughed contemptuously. "Carve an altar that is higher than the church in which it stands, and you shall have my daughter—not before—so help me God!"

A piteous cry came from the next room. Ruppacher opened the door; Mailie lay unconscious before the crucifix. Hans hastened to her, but the angry man raised his hand against him.

For a moment it seemed that the sacred knife must leap from his pocket; but he struggled with himself, and rushed out of the house, up the hill to the Minster, to his old friend, the "Kaiser's tree."

It was a perfect noonday. A cloudless sky arched the shadowless earth; the castle of Sponeck was outlined against a background of gold, like some fairy-palace, and the Rhine broke in foaming surf on her steep rocks. But the beautiful picture before him wounded Hans, for it seemed to him that nature was unsympathetic with her child's grief, and he sat in the niche, under the rose-tree, for the first time failing to find happiness there.

He could never win Mailie now, no one could help him, not even Kaiser Max, if he should come back from the grave, for had not Ruppacher sworn a terrible oath that he should never have her till he had made an altar higher than the church?

This was impossible, unless God should work a miracle for him; perhaps he might never see her again, and tears of longing and pain coursed down his cheeks, and he buried his face in his hands like a helpless child, and none came to comfort him; all was silent around him, save the chafers humming about the roses.

Suddenly something struck him sharply on the back; he started and turned quickly, but it was only the little rose-tree that had at last, by its own strength, broken forth from the niche where Mailie's hand had bound it, and in escaping, had struck him as if in greeting. There it stood, tall and straight, and he saw for the first time how much higher it was than the niche in which it grew. Quick as lightning a thought shot through his tired brain. A moment of reflection—a cry of triumph—then he fell on his knees in joyful thanksgiving. "Lord God, Thou art great, even in Thy small things, and Thy wonders never cease!"

What was it that the little tree had taught him? What was it that made him kiss its rough bark in a wild transport of joy?

Hans saw Mailie no more; her father had sent her to the convent at Marienau, yet her prison walls were not so strong but that a song, a greeting from Hans, sometimes reached her. He, too, lived like a hermit in his cell, working from early dawn till the last faint streaks of light tinged the western sky. Curiosity ran high, but every request to see his work received the same answer: "That was not included in the contract; you must wait."

At last, after two long, weary years of patient labour he declared the work done, and three days later, on the Feast of the Assumption, the new altar was to be dedicated. Great was the excitement, and that morning an unusual crowd of worshippers climbed the Minster-hill. Joyfully the bell rang out across the Rhine, and Hans, who had been in the church since daybreak, gave one last glance of love at his work, and with bowed head and bent knee said: "God, bless Thou the work of my hands," then disappeared behind the altar to watch the effect of his work upon the people.

The doors were opened, the crowd entered, and a cry of admiration echoed through the church. The altar lay in the full rays of the morning sun and the whole glorious vision stood out before their eyes in perfect rounded forms. In the centre was the Blessed Mother with her arms crossed over bosom, and head meekly bowed, to receive the crown that God the Father, and God the Son, held above her.

When the service was at an end everybody pressed forward to see the creator of the great masterpiece. He came from behind the altar, modest and deeply moved, but so handsome and so full of unconscious pride that every eye hung on him in admiration.

"Is not the *Ruppacherin* like the Blessed Mother of God?" whispered one in the crowd.

"And God the Father is like Kaiser Max," said an old man. "'Tis his face exactly."

Like a train of fire it ran through the crowd that Liefrink had put Mailie Ruppacher and Kaiser Max in his work.

"Yes, dear friends," said Hans quietly, "you are right, and I have done it because I know of nothing in the world more beautiful and good than the *Ruppacherin* and our dear dead Kaiser."

"Well said. He is right," was heard on all sides. Now Hans went fearlessly to where Ruppacher stood.

"Herr Ruppacher," he said, "two years ago you promised me your daughter for my wife when I should have fulfilled a strange condition made by you. I was to build an altar higher than the church—an impossible thing you thought; but look up, Herr Ruppacher, the altar is a foot higher than the place in which it stands. I have only bent the top."

The Councillor looked up and grew pale. He had not thought of that. A murmur of applause ran through the crowd.

"I have done my part, Herr Councillor, now do yours, and give me your daughter for my wife."

"It was the Kaiser's tree that taught me that."

Ruppacher tottered as if struck by a heavy blow. Hans had taken him at his word, and he was not the man to trifle with his oath. He took Mailie's hand and placed it in her lover's.

"A Ruppacher has never broken his oath. Take my child," he said drily, "since I have sworn."

"Mailie, my wife!" cried Hans with exulting joy.

After seven long years of alternate hope and despair he had won her for his own. Words cannot describe Mailie's look of happiness as she was folded in his strong arms.

Some of their old companions ran out and hastily wove two crowns from some twigs of the rose-tree, and amid loud applause they crowned the master and his bride. But Hans laid his crown on the steps of the altar, and said:

"Let them be God's roses, for through them He saved me. Look, Mailie," he whispered, pointing to the bent summit of the altar, "it was the Kaiser's tree that taught me that."

Three weeks later Hans and Mailie were betrothed before the altar. Breisach had never seen so magnificent an affair, and Father Ruppacher was no longer so testy as one might think, for he had now more respect for the worthless art of his son-in-law.

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OLD BARNABY'S BESS.

BESS had been put to a great deal of trouble this day. There was always plenty to do at Freshwater Ranch, and she also had to do it all, for the old man, Barnaby, had ceased to be of any particular use in this world long before Geronimo had become the war chief of the Chiricahua Apachés.

Bess, his daughter, managed the ranch, milked the cows, cooked the food, did the washing, attended to the modest little garden that she had coaxed from the arid Arizona soil, and even gave the two cayuse ponies that belonged to her father all the grooming they ever got. Besides that, she had to attend to the selling of water from the artesian well that was the only excuse for Freshwater Ranch's existence.

There was not so very much traffic on the road that ran by Mount Graham down to the dusty Gila Valley, but there were forty miles at a stretch of it, and Freshwater Ranch had the only water that was to be found upon it.

And so, when the freight-teams and the army ambulances made the trip from Fort Grant to Fort Thomas, the teamsters were very glad to pay a shilling a bucketful for water and double rates for forage. And that is how Bess made a living, a wretched, lonely, almost outcast living, for her father and herself.

But there was plenty to do this day, and plenty of excitement. For the first time in all her memory a whole troop of handsome cavalrymen, with a bright-cheeked and still handsomer young lieutenant at its head, had come to Freshwater Ranch to actually camp over night, and perhaps stay even longer.

A body of White River Apachés, getting over the effects of a tiswin drunk, had crossed the reservation, and started on a murdering and thieving raid after their usual manner. Quite after their usual manner, also, two troops of cavalry had started in pursuit, following their trail with the faint hope of catching up with the fleet-footed Apachés; while the remainder of two regiments of cavalry and twice as many of infantry had been put at patrol duty, and at the guarding of waterholes, springs, and mountain passes.

It is the young lieutenant who is sent on this patrol duty as a rule. The more experienced officers are sent in pursuit. And it is a hard grind, indeed, on the nerves of the impatient young lieutenant to sit for days in his camp watching the surrounding country through his field-glass and receiving the reports of his scouts, always the same monotonous: "Didn't see no signs of 'em, sir."

It is his ambition to get under fire. It is the height of a young lieutenant's wildest dream to capture or kill a raiding Apaché. And so the poor fellow gnashes his teeth and swears at his luck, and looks through his field-glasses until he can see all sorts of things with his tired eyes—except Indians.

But woe to him if Mr. Crazy Bear, with his family and relations and intimate friends, happens to slip through his lines during the night and the trail is not discovered promptly the next day. Woe to him if it is the grinning captain of the pursuing troop that tantalisingly informs him, while he is still rubbing his sleepy eyes, that not only Crazy Bear, but he with his whole troop of tired cavalry has been able to steal upon him and past him.

On the other hand, though, what glory if, by a rare piece of good luck, one of his men dashes breathlessly in while the dew is still heavy on the lean bunch-grass of the mountain with the exciting report that he has happened upon the raider's trail, and that it is but an hour or two old!

Then it is "Boots and saddles!" and mount and away, and ten to one the lieutenant is able to cut in ahead of the troops that are pursuing, and, with his fresh horses, and his wild anxiety to "get there," able to catch up with Mr. Crazy Bear, and capture him and all his retinue, after a nice little skirmish, in which he gets a hole through his hat, we hope, and not his heart.

And then he is one of the regiment's heroes. The old captains talk about how young Smith of "ours" cut in ahead of grumpy old Blank, of some other regiment, that never could ride, nor fight either, for that matter. And he sends his campaign hat, with the identical hole in it, back to his mother, who almost faints, and surely sobs for a whole day, and has to pray more fervently than ever that her boy will not be killed by some awful Apaché.

Such was the precise situation of young Mr. Barstow, second lieutenant of the —th Regiment of United States Cavalry, on this day when Bess was at her wits' end with work and excitement.

Chilcauno and his band had crossed the reservation at San Carlos, after murdering a freighter and stealing his horses, and all Southern Arizona was in a state of excitement. To be ordered out to guard a watering station is bad enough, but when you are quite persuaded that the miscreants have gone in another direction, and that you have no chance whatever of being in or near at the death, the situation is almost unbearable.

And that was why Lieutenant Barstow fumed and fretted, and walked up and down in front of the half log, half adobe house called Freshwater Ranch all the long afternoon, and did nothing more important than swear at a trooper, much after the manner of several captains he knew, and then apologise to the trooper and make himself ridiculous, just because he had some of those higher ideas of a soldier.

And so Bess caught but few glimpses of the lieutenant as he occasionally passed the door, but she saw that he was young and handsome, and her woman's heart was in a flutter. It was all that she could do to think up something unusually good for supper.

Besides the regular menu of biscuits, bacon, beef, and potatoes, she had some carefully treasured tinned corn and some tinned peaches. She got out her very brightest and newest calico dress, and braided her unruly hair for the first time for months. She did not even scold the sly trooper whom she caught stealing some milk, for fear the young lieutenant would come round to that side of the house—which would be dreadfully embarrassing. And yet she wanted to see the lieutenant and hear him talk—oh, so much!

She had read in novels some mysterious things about how young people fell in love with each other and married, and—well, everything is possible in this world.

It was at supper that they really met.

The lieutenant made a polite bow. He was a little bit surprised. He had heard some of the other officers of the garrison say laughingly that the only pretty woman in Arizona was Barnaby's Bess—excepting always, from regimental courtesy, the ladies of the regiment.

But he had forgotten all about it in the excitement of his first experience in the field. It occurred to him now, but she was prettier than he had imagined she could be. His ideas of beauty were framed in civilised landscapes, and his divinities had been dressed in costly stuffs and wore diamonds and were buds from mature New York family trees.

But he had not seen a pretty woman for several months, and he was just a little bit embarrassed himself. He hardly noticed the calico. He was quite charmed by the white apron. He concluded at once that, perhaps, this first scout of his would not be so monotonous after all. He would flirt a little—only in fun, of course. It would be rather a relief from the dulness of the post.

So he ate in silence, and stared so hard at Bess that her cheeks flushed a deeper crimson than they had ever known before. And to her amazement and delight he insisted on calling her Miss Barnaby. In her day-dreams she had often imagined some handsome young man addressing her respectfully as Miss Barnaby. Here was the delightful reality. She

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spilled the coffee, and could not eat a mouthful of supper, although she was tired and hungry.

And after supper the young lieutenant insisted on helping her wash the dishes. He said it would be great fun, and quite a relief from the rough life of a soldier. Poor youngster, he had become so used to war's alarms. In fact they had become quite a bore. And it seemed to Bess that he stood awfully close to her.

Once or twice their hands touched—an accident, she was quite sure. And then, when all her work was finished, the dishes cleaned, the cows and horses fed (in all of which duties the young lieutenant helped)—delight of delights! he actually asked her to take a little walk with him.

As for him, well—she was a girl, and she was pretty. Her calico dress looked sweet in the moonlight, and she had taken off the apron. They strolled up the road a little distance, and then branched off on a winding trail that led down to a little valley flooded with the rich moonlight that broke through the clear Arizona atmosphere. There was an intersecting trail at the foot, and when they reached it Bess gave a little start, and the lieutenant, with all his old college days promptness, took advantage of the opportunity to place his arm round her waist.

"Don't be afraid," he whispered.

"Oh, I am not afaid," she answered demurely.

And then she stooped down quickly and seemed to pick something up from the trail.

"Did you drop anything?" he asked with mock politeness. "Why didn't you tell me? It was my duty to pick it up, you know."

"I did not drop anything," she answered. "Let's sit down on this rock."

They sat down on the rock, and the young lieutenant put his arm round her waist again and took hold of her hands, and found himself unconsciously looking for rings, in the manner of young men who wish to hold a young lady's hand, and feel in duty bound to offer some slight excuse to the fair one.

They did not talk very much. There was not much to talk about. Their mutual friends were few, and, therefore, there could be no gossip. Theatres, books, fashions, everything were barred, from necessity. Nevertheless, it was not long before the lieutenant's brown moustache drew gradually near to Bess's pretty lips, and not long after that Bess received the first kiss she ever had from a young man. She did not struggle. She was utterly unaware of the arts of her fair sisters in the East. But she did turn squarely round and look the lieutenant very earnestly in the face.

"Do you mean anything by that?" she asked him.

He was surprised at the question, and he was gentleman enough to perceive that what was a mere evening's diversion to him might be something infinitely more serious to a lonely girl on almost a western desert. He took his hand from her waist and moved away a little.

"No," he answered frankly, "only that you are pretty—and I didn't think you'd mind."

"I didn't mind," answered Bess, "and I wouldn't mind if I thought you cared for me. In fact," she added, with alarming candour, "I would like it if I were sure you were not making fun of me."

The lieutenant was silent.

"Tell me," she said, clasping his hand excitedly, "if I should do something that would be a great benefit to you, would you think more of me—would you love me?"

"No," he answered quickly, standing up and looking at her a little curiously. "You are too serious. I want to be fair. The fact is, I am engaged—to a young lady in New York. We are going to be married in a year or two, when I get more pay. And perhaps sooner—if I could do something to distinguish myself, you know. Her father has enough influence to get me promoted to the staff, or something like that, so we could live in the east and have more pay. Perhaps I owe you an apology."

She was clutching the rough edges of the rock.

"Is she very beautiful?" she asked.

"I think so," he answered. "See, here is a picture of her. You can see what she looks like in the moonlight."

She looked at the photograph a long time.

"Does she always dress like that?" she asked.

"No," he answered laughingly. "That is a ball-dress—an evening dress. It would hardly do for her to go out of doors in a dress like that. She might catch cold. But she is just as pretty in other dresses; and I love her very much."

Bess handed back the photograph, and looked for a long time at the yellow trail. She had bit her lip to repress a sigh, but she had been too long alone and friendless to lose her self-control.

"Look here," she suddenly asked, "if you were to catch these Indians would that be what you wanted to do to be able to get your promotion and marry her?"

"I should say it would," he answered bitterly, "but that isn't my luck."

"It is! It is!" she cried, falling upon her knees by the trail. "See, I give her to you. Look here—and there—and there!" She held up to him the thing she had picked up when he was mockingly polite. "It is the lash to an Indian quirt—worn through. They are riding hard and their horses are tired. To arms! To arms! I tell you, you can catch them before morning! To arms!"

He had started before she had finished, and was bounding up the trail with long, athletic strides, leaving her alone on her knees at the intersection of the trails.

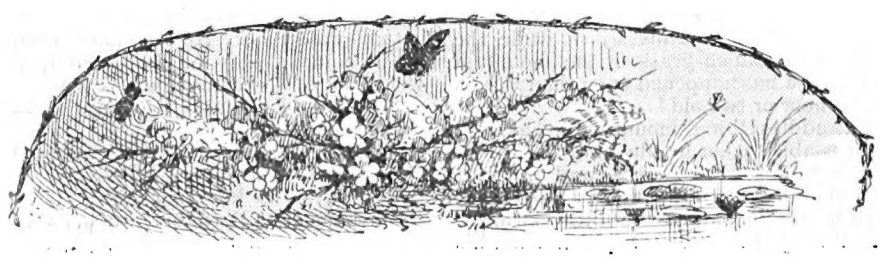
She was still there when the troop rode silently by with the anxious but silent young lieutenant at its head. He bowed to her as he passed, but she did not see him. After the last pack-mule had passed out of sight down the valley, she rose and walked slowly up the mountain.

"I was very foolish," she said. "He has known her a long time, and he never saw me before. Besides, she wears silk dresses all the time and is rich. But that should not make any difference in love. He kissed me! Why should he kiss me if he did not care for me? It is queer. She is a great lady, and I——"

She burst into tears and cried for a long while as she sat on the yellow trail at the top of the hill. It was far into the night when she rose to go.

She heard, far off in the distance, through the clear air, the faint popping of carbines and rifles.

"I have given her to him," she muttered, as she made her way uncertainly to the ranch. "She is a lady, and wears silk; and she will never know about me, for he will be ashamed to tell her; and—and—I am going to ask Father José, when he comes here next year with his little Mexican donkeys and his candles and white robes, why it is that God has never sent anyone to love me."



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THE GOOD FORTUNATE ONE.

A FAMOUS TALE OF JAPAN.

MANY years ago there lived in Tokio a certain nobleman, renowned for his wealth and his great philanthropy. It was his delight to wander about the streets at night, unattended, and disguised as a simple samurai (knight, or retainer), and so, untrammelled by rank or dignity, enter the theatres and tea-houses of all classes.

One night he was sitting in a tea-garden, in a humble portion of the city, when three young men, dressed as labourers, sauntered in, and, seating themselves near him, called for refreshments of the cheapest kind.

"Will you not honour us by joining in our humble repast?" said one, addressing him with the courteous humility which distinguishes all classes of Japanese. "I see by your two swords that you are a samurai, and far above us in rank, but you seem lonely, and we should feel honoured if you will join us."

The nobleman, pleased with this cordial invitation, immediately left his solitary square of matting and seated himself near the speaker.

"What Daimyo (feudal lord) do you serve?" they asked him, when the formalities of welcome were at an end.

"None," answered the nobleman. "I am a roin (wandering knight), a free and independent samurai, having left by my own will the service of the Duke Itsu," mentioning his own name.

"I have heard that he was a very kind master," said one of the young men. "Why did you leave him?"

"Oh," said the Duke, "he had many strange and undignified habits which kept me in a state of constant mortification. He would wander about the streets of Tokio at night, entering into the commonest tea-houses, and talking familiarly with persons of the lowest rank. I do not doubt that he has been on this very spot."

"Oh, no!" cried his listeners, in some excitement; "he surely would not come to this cheap place."

"I wish that he would come," said one of the three, with a sigh; "I would beg a favour of him."

"What is it that you would ask?" said the nobleman, with great interest.

"My one wish," answered the speaker, "is to ride a horse. I have dreamed many times of being on horseback, and it was delightful beyond words, but I expect to die without ever gaining my desire."

"And what would *you* ask, if the Duke were here?" said the nobleman, turning to the second youth.

"My great wish," answered he, "is to eat a dinner exactly like the one the Duke eats every day. If I could have one such dinner, I would ask no more."

"And now tell us your desire," said the nobleman, addressing the young man who had first given the invitation for him to join their party.

"I would not be satisfied with either of their wishes," said the young man slowly. "I would desire to live a whole day and night as the Duke lives; to eat from his dishes, to ride in his kago (palanquin), and, at night, to sleep in his bed. Then would I be contented and happy."

"The Duke's slumber is not the happiest," said the nobleman, with a sigh. "Spies and secret enemies lurk, as poisonous serpents, under the castle walls."

For some time longer he conversed with them, learning the name and abode of each; then, bidding them a cordial farewell, he left the tea-house, and made his way to his stately castle.

In the morning a body of servants, carrying heavily adorned kagos, were sent to invite the young men to the castle. Their surprise and delight knew no bounds, and when the mighty Daimyo welcomed them as friends, and seated them in the place of honour, they were ready to burst with pride.

For the one who had wished to ride, he ordered his finest steed, caparisoned in white and gold; but when the young fellow was placed upon it, fear seized him, and he pleaded for mercy.

"No, no, you shall ride!" cried the Duke, in high good-humour; and the horse was made to prance and plunge about the court-yard, until the wretched rider fell to the ground, and had to be carried to his home.

The second guest, who had wished to eat as the Duke ate, was now conducted to the banquet-hall, where such a bewildering and tempting array of strange dishes was set before him that he soon made himself ill, and was borne away groaning and racked with nausea.

The third young man was now the object of attention.

All eyes were upon him as he watched his two friends taken away in misery and disgrace; but his head was set proudly, and he turned with composure toward the Duke.

"I have no fear," he said, in tones which were almost haughty. "I still wish to live one day and one night as thy equal; then I am content."

"Lead him to my richest bath," said the Duke to his servants, "and then attire him as my son."

When the young man re-appeared, his thick hair oiled and perfumed after the manner of noblemen, his tall form robed in silks of heaviest texture, and the two swords of rank thrust through his gold-embroidered sash, he made such a picture of manly beauty that the Duke's heart yearned toward him.

"Would that the gods had granted me such a son," he thought with sorrow. "But I have no heir to perpetuate my

Three young men, dressed as labourers, sauntered in.

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name; I shall fall like a lonely pine tree beside the river, and none shall come after me."

For that day, the young plebeian was given the name of Yomei (Yo-may), which means one-day-spending, and through all of the ceremonies and observances of rank he conducted himself with such modest dignity that all of the court officials were filled with wonder, and whispered among themselves, "He is born to a high position."

That night he was given the ducal sleeping apartment.

After the castle was still and dark, he cautiously arose, and lighting a candle, prepared to examine the wonders and beauties of the room. Hanging in the toko-mono (shallow alcove) he found a bow of ancient workmanship and a sheaf of arrows such as the old heroes once used. Fitting one to the bow, he gave it a backward pull, when, to his dismay, it slipped from his grasp, and went whizzing through the rich and painted mado (inner sliding walls).

He heard a low cry, followed by the thud of a falling body, and then all was silence again.

"Unhappy wretch!" he cried to himself. "My day of triumph has ended in murder. I have killed some one with my ignorant stupidity, and in the morning I shall be beheaded."

He blew out the candle, and went to bed, where he lay shivering and trembling until the day broke.

Then the sound of the moving servants came to him, and the coldness of despair filled his heart, for he knew that the discovery of his deed might come every second.

Presently he heard a cry of alarm, and then, indeed, did he give himself up for lost.

"Here is a dead man!" exclaimed one, in frightened tones. "Where is he?" "Who is it?" "Who killed him?" came a mingling of voices, as other servants ran crowding in.

"Why, it is the traitor Gujiwa, who has thrice attempted to kill our master." "Oh, blessed deed!" "What a beautiful shot. The arrow has pierced his left eye to the skull." "It is an ancient arrow from the Duke's chamber."

"The young stranger sleeps there to-night; he must have sent the deadly shaft." "Ah! a hole in the mado! He must have shot through the mado." "What skill! What wonderful power; to shoot an enemy without seeing him!" "Wonderful! He has saved the master's life."

Yomei, listening to all this, became almost crazed with delight.

The sudden transition from despair to hope intoxicated him like strong wine. He threw his rich kimono (robe) about him, pushed aside the pierced mado, and strode towards the servants.

"Have you found the traitor Gujiwa, whom I slew last night?" he asked haughtily. "Cut off his head, and carry it to your master with my compliments. I suspected that this attempt would be made, and obtained an entrance to the castle by disguising myself as a labourer."

The servants grovelled at his feet.

"But, honourable lord," implored one, an old man who had been in the family for half-a-century, "how could you take such aim when the mado were closed?"

"Tut!" said the young man with a gesture of contempt, "I do not need both sight and hearing to take good aim. I can shoot any portion of the body by hearing alone. This time I selected the villain's left eye, just as he was winking it."

"Wonderful! Wonderful!" they whispered in awe-struck tones, and he walked through their cowering ranks with the air of a conqueror.

The gratitude and admiration of the Duke knew no bounds. Indeed, so pleased was he with the beauty, skill, and courage of his young *protégé* that he took measures to formally adopt him; so Yomei was raised from the rank of a bamboo-cutter to that of son and heir to one of the most powerful Daimyo of the empire.

He led a life of ease and luxury, and improved from day to day, so that his fame went abroad to other cities, and his adopted father grew to love him deeply.

But no life can be all happiness, and so for Yomei there was the thorn, the one dark spot.

This was in the person of his adopted mother, the Duke's wife, who from the first had been his bitter enemy. Having no children of her own, she was ungenerous enough to hate the innocent adopted son, who by his very presence reminded her that she had given no heir to the Duke. She also suspected that his skill in slaying the robber was not entirely genuine; and she had learned, beyond all doubt, that his antecedents were of the humblest. At first she tried in every way to turn her husband against him, but, finding this impossible, she set to work to find other means of deposing him.

Soon there came a rumour of a band of robbers who infested a hill in the suburbs of Tokio, and were so fierce that even the soldiers dared not attack them. The Mikado had offered a title and great wealth to anyone brave enough to attempt their capture, but up to this time none had been found.

The evil step-mother, without consulting her husband, sent a letter to the Court saying that her noble son Yomei was thirsting for the opportunity to display his skill and courage, and declared that he was able to vanquish the band single-handed.

The Mikado, highly pleased with so much bravery, immediately despatched a royal document to the young man, accepting his services, and ordering him to start forth the following morning.

Poor Yomei was again in despair.

"Alas! the end of my dream has come," he mourned to himself. "There are eleven arrows, and eleven robbers, and so I must kill a robber with each arrow. Oh! why did I not keep to my bamboo-cutting, and leave ambition for the rich!"

His father grieved deeply to see him set forth, but, in spite of his sadness, was buoyed up by his evident anticipation of his son's success. The envious step-mother, affecting equal regret, offered to arrange a basket of lunch for him with her own aristocratic hands. She prepared all of his favourite articles of food, and then, for fear that some lucky accident might save him from the robbers, put a small portion of deadly poison in each piece of food as she laid it in the hamper.

Put a small portion of deadly poison in each piece of food.

Yomei, unconscious of this double danger, bade them all a sorrowful farewell, and rode away with his eyes bent upon the ground. At one time he thought of turning his horse and making his escape, but then he reflected that death would be no worse than disgrace and the old life of toil, and so listlessly kept on toward the haunted mountain.

He had reached the foot of this, when he heard loud, hoarse shouts, as if of triumph, and, filled with terror, he sprang from his horse, and rapidly climbed a tree. In a few moments the robbers were upon him. "Where is the rider?" called out one, looking about him with an aspect of such fierceness that Yomei well nigh fell to the earth.

"The horse is mine!" cried another.

"This is my saddle!" exclaimed a third. "See! It is heavy with silver."

"Ah!" from a fourth, as he tore open the hamper. "I have found the dainty fellow's lunch. Let us feast upon it before we find and kill the owner."

Yomei, knowing nothing of the hidden poison, thought these moments his last. With the apathy of despair, he gazed upon them as they portioned out, with many a rude jest and remark, the food which had been destined for him.

"What carrion the aristocrats do eat!" cried the Captain, throwing from him the remains of a small devilfish stuffed with rice, sugar, and vinegar. "The thing is filled with

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medicine! It is bitter! By all the fiends of earth and sea, it is poison! We are tricked!"

"It is poison! It is poison!" they all shrieked, running frantically past one another, with horrible exclamations and contortions of physical agony. "Where is the man?" they cried. "We are poisoned like frogs in a well! Where is he who has tricked us?"

"There he is!" called the dying chief, who had just caught sight of the cowering Yomei, "Shoot him! Up after him! Burn the tree! Ah-h-h!" But it was too late. They lay about on the lush mountain-grass, in various attitudes of violent death, and their glassy eyes were all turned upward toward Yomei. The fears of that valiant youth, however, were at an end. He descended with a bold and careless air, and, walking from one to another, stuck an arrow deep into the left eye of each. Then, mounting his horse, he rode home.

The first person to meet him was his step-mother. At the sight of him she fell to the ground, faint and stricken with fear.

"Are you not pleased to see me, mother?" he asked brightly. "I must thank you for the delightful lunch you prepared for me. See!" opening the hamper, "every morsel has been eaten!"

His father's joy at seeing him alive was deep and sincere.

"Why, my son," he said, after the ceremonials of welcome were through, "your armour is untouched, your hair is as smooth as when you left the house. How did you slay such a fierce body of men with so little exertion?"

"Oh, it was a simple matter!" said Yomei proudly. "When they caught sight of me, they came toward me running side by side. I took the eleven arrows, fitting them all to my bow which I held horizontally, instead of in the usual manner, and the arrows were placed so exactly that, as they flew, each was pointed towards a robber, and struck him directly in the left eye. You will find them all there now, each with the arrow sticking upright"

"Your skill is more than mortal!" cried the happy father. "Now you are a nobleman in your own right, and will be given a daughter of the Mikado in marriage. I foresee that you will add lustre to the ancient name which you bear." And he fell upon his son's neck and wept with pure joy.

After this the step-mother ceased in her evil designs, fully convinced of Yomei's supernatural powers.

He married a princess, built a great castle for himself, and to this day his name is a synonym in Japan for shrewdness and luck.

THE ALPINE INN.

LIKE many of the wooden hotels found in the rocky crevices which abound among the white summits of the high Alps, the Inn of Schwarenbach offered refuge to any tired traveller who followed the Gemmi Pass. The inn was open for six months, and kept by the family of Jean Hauser, but as soon as the snow began to fall, filling the valleys, and rendering the descent to Loëche impracticable, the women, the father, and the three sons departed, leaving the old guide, Gaspard Hari, with the young guide, Ulrich Kunsi, and Sam, the big dog, to take care of the house.

The two men and the dog lived until spring in this snow prison, having before their eyes nothing but the white slopes of the Balmhorn, and surrounded by peaks buried under the same blankets of snow which almost crushed the little house, heaped on its roof, walled up its door, and blocked up its windows.

It was the day that the Hauser family was to return to Loëche—winter was approaching, and the descent would soon be dangerous. Three mules, loaded with baggage, and driven by the three sons, led the way; on a fourth rode the mother, Jeanne Hauser, and her daughter Louise; following them came the father, accompanied by the two guides, who escorted the family to the end of the pass. This made up the little procession.

They passed the lake, now frozen, which lay at the foot of the rocks, extending before the inn; then they followed the valley, white as a winding sheet, and about which towered all the snow-clad mountains. A ray of sunlight fell across this shining and frozen desert, lighting it with a cold and blinding flame; no living thing was visible in this ocean of mountain summits, no movement in this vast immeasurable solitude, not a sound in this profound silence. Little by little, the young guide Ulrich Kunsi, a tall Swiss, with long legs, left behind him Father Hauser and old Gaspard Hari, and joined the mules on which the women rode.

The younger one saw him coming and watched him with wistful eyes. She was a little blonde; her milk-white cheeks and her very light hair looked as if they had been bleached by living in this ice and snow. When he had reached the beast upon which she was mounted, he put his hand on the crupper, and walked slowly. Mother Hauser talked to him, repeating over and over the innumerable details for the winter's work. It would be the first time he had stayed up there, whereas the old Hari had spent fourteen winters under the snow in the Inn of Schwarenbach.

Ulrich Kunsi listened without noticing a word, constantly watching the young girl. From time to time he replied, "Yes, Madame Hauser," but his thoughts were far away, and his calm face was unmoved.

They reached the Lake of Daube, whose long frozen surface lay at the foot of the valley. At their right the Dauberhorn rose, showing the tall rocks which crowned its peak. As they approached the Gemmi Pass, they commenced to descend to Loëche, and all at once was opened up to them the immense horizon of the Valois Alps, which separate the large and small valleys of the Rhone.

As far as one could see, white summits rose, irregular, flat, or pointed, glistening in the sunlight; the Mischabel with her two peaks, the powerful Wisschorn, the ponderous Brummeghorn, the high and pyramidal Cervin, that slayer of men, and the monstrous coquette, the Dlut-Blanche. Below them, in a deep valley, at the foot of a very steep precipice, lay Loëche. The houses looked like grains of sand, thrown into this enormous crevice, which finishes and shuts in the Gemmi Pass, and opens below on the Rhone.

The mule train stopped on the edge of the serpentine path, which wound zigzag down the mountain side, reaching at last the little village almost invisible at its foot.

"Good-bye, and good courage till next year, my friends," said Father Hauser.

Old Hari repeated, "Till next year."

They embraced each other, Madame Hauser offered her cheek, and the young girl followed in her turn.

When Ulrich Kunsi kissed Louise, he murmured in her ear, "Don't forget us up there," and she replied, "No," so faintly that he had to guess what she said.

"Good-bye," said Jean Hauser again, "keep well."

He passed in front of the women, and began the descent. Soon all three had disappeared at the first turn in the road, and the two guides wended their way toward the Inn of Schwarenbach.

They walked slowly, silently, side by side, realising fully that the summer was over, and that now for four or five months they should see only each other.

Finally, Gaspard Hari began to tell some of his experiences of other winters. He had lived with Michel Canol, who was now too old to try it again, as some accident might happen during this long solitude. They were not lonely, he said. The only way to do was for each one to have his regular work, and then for amusement they played cards, or threw dice—anything to pass the time. Ulrich Kunsi listened, his eyes on the ground, and his thoughts following the little winding path which descended to the village.

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Soon the inn came in sight, a little black spot in the immense snow cloud. When they opened the door, Sam, the big curly dog, played and jumped about them.

"Come, son," said old Gaspard, "we have no women to help us now, we must get the dinner. You pare the potatoes."

Sitting down on the wooden bench, Hari began to prepare the soup.

The next morning seemed long to Ulrich Kunsi. Old Hari smoked and spat in the hearth, while the young man looked at the glistening mountain in front of the house. In the afternoon he went out and retraced the steps of the day before, hunting for the footprints of the mules on which the two women rode—and when he reached the Gemmi Pass, he lay flat on his stomach on the edge of the precipice and looked at Loëche. The village in its rocky well was not yet buried under the snow which was all around it. The pine forests protected it. The little houses from that distance looked like stones in a field. The young girl was there now in one of those little grey houses. In which? Ulrich Kunsi was too far away to distinguish one from the other. How he wished he could go down there while he might. But the sun had already disappeared behind the high peak of Wildstuebel, and the young man went home.

Gaspard Hari still smoked. When he saw his companion enter, he proposed a game of cards, and they seated themselves opposite each other at the table. For some time they played a game called "La Brisque," then, having had their supper, they went to bed. The following days were like this one, clear and cold, without snow. Old Gaspard spent his afternoons hunting eagles and other rare birds which ventured up to these frozen heights, while Ulrich went regularly to look at the village in the valley. Then they again played cards, dice, dominoes, gaining or losing a little to add interest to the game.

One morning Hari, having risen first, called his companion. A moving cloud, light as foam surrounded them, and noiselessly buried them little by little under a mantle of froth. This lasted four days and nights. They had to break open the doors and windows, and dig a path so that they could get out of the house. The snow in twelve hours had frozen as hard as granite. They lived like prisoners, not venturing beyond their threshold. They divided their daily work. Ulrich Kunsi took the washing and housework, and also cut the wood, while Gaspard Hari did the cooking and tended the fire.

These monotonous and regular occupations were only varied by a game of cards. They never quarrelled, each being calm and placid; they did not even have sharp words, or show any temper, or grow impatient, for they had philosophically resigned themselves to the winter on the mountain top. Once in a while old Gaspard, being the bolder of the two, went in search of chamois. Occasionally he shot one. Then there was great rejoicing in the little inn—a festival with fresh meat.

One morning he went out. The mercury was 18 below zero—the sun had not yet risen, and the hunter hoped to find the chamois near Wildstuebel. Ulrich, remaining alone, stayed in bed till ten o'clock. He was naturally a good sleeper, but he never had dared indulge himself in his fondness for rest while the old guide set him such a good example by being very prompt. He breakfasted slowly with Sam, who passed most of his time, day and night, sleeping by the fire. Kunsi felt sad, frightened by the solitude. Seized by the desire for human companionship, he went in search of Gaspard, who should return by four o'clock. The snow had levelled all the valley, filling up the crevices, effacing the two lakes, covering the rocks. It was blinding to the eyes—a glare of ice.

It was now three weeks since Ulrich had been to the precipice where he could see the village of Loëche; he wished to see it first before cutting a path toward Wildstuebel. Loëche was completely covered by snow, and the houses could not be seen at all, buried under this white mantle.

He turned to the right and reached the Glacier of Loemmern, walking with the long, steady strides of a mountaineer, hitting the snow with his steel-pointed staff, and looking with his strong, far-sighted eyes to discover a moving body on this immeasurable sea of ice. Reaching the end of the glacier, he stopped, wondering if Gaspard had come this way, and, feeling anxious, began to run.

The day was dying, the snow gradually became pink. A dry and chilling wind blew over the crystal surface. Ulrich gave a shrill and prolonged cry. His voice echoed in the death-like stillness. It ran along over the icy billows of the glaciers, like the cry of a bird over the waves of the sea. At last it was heard no more. There was no response.

He resumed his steps. The sun had set. The crests of the mountains were still purple, though in the valley it was dark as night. The young man felt afraid. It seemed to him that the silence, the cold, the solitude of these wintry heights, entered into his very soul, and would stop or freeze his blood, stiffen his body, and make him into a man of ice. He ran as fast as he could, flying toward the Inn. Gaspard must have come home during his absence. He had undoubtedly taken another route; he should surely find him seated in front of the fire, with a chamois dead at his feet.

Soon the inn came in sight. No smoke issued from the chimney. Ulrich ran faster, and threw open the door. Sam curled about his feet to welcome him. Gaspard was not there. Alarmed, Kunsi turned round and round, as if he hoped to find his friend hidden away in some corner. Then he lighted the fire, put on the soup-pot, and waited, hoping to see the old man come in at any moment. From time to time he went to the door to watch for him. Night had fallen, the dark and gloomy night of the mountains. At the edge of the horizon, a dim, new moon was sinking behind the hills.

Ulrich came back, warmed his hands and feet, and thought of all the accidents which might have happened. Gaspard might have broken his leg; fallen in some ravine; made a false step and sprained his ankle; and there he was in the snow, stiff with cold, distressed, lost, crying for help with all his strength, in the awful stillness of the night. But where? The mountain was so vast, and so dangerous at this season, that it would take ten or twenty guides, walking for a week, to find a man in this immense space.

Ulrich Kunsi, however, resolved to take Sam and hunt for Gaspard if by one o'clock in the morning he had not returned. For this purpose, he made all his preparations—putting in his bag food for two days, taking his hob-nailed boots, twisting about his waist a long, strong rope, looking to see that his steel-pointed alpenstock and his hatchet, with which he cut steps in the ice, were in order. The fire burned brightly on the hearth, and the big dog warmed himself in the firelight.

The clock, in its sonorous wooden box, ticked like the beating of one's heart. His ear was sharpened to hear any distant sound, and he started when the wind rattled the roof or the door. Midnight sounded. He trembled. Feeling faint with apprehension, he put some water on the fire, so as to have some hot coffee before starting out. When the clock struck one, he got up, called Sam, opened the door and set out in the direction of Wildstuebel. For five hours he climbed, scaling the rocks, cutting the ice, always advancing, only halting occasionally when the dog hung back, at the foot of some very steep precipice. It was nearly six o'clock when he reached one of the summits where Gaspard often found the chamois, and then he waited for day to break.

The sky was pale over his head. Suddenly a gleam of light, born no one could say where, illumined the immense ocean of white peaks which surrounded him. Little by little, the most distant summits became pink, and the red sun appeared behind the heavy giants of the Bernoise Alps. Again beginning his search, like some hunter who sees the footprints of the chamois, he called to Sam, "Hunt, old fellow, hunt;" and as he descended the mountain, his restless eyes searched every crevice, and he cried shrilly, the cry dying in the awful silence.

Toward noon he seated himself in despair and ate his breakfast, giving the poor dog some food. Having finished, he again began his quest.

By the time night came he had covered thirty kilometres of the mountain; he was too far from the Inn to go home, and

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too tired to walk any longer, so he dug a hole in the snow, and lay down with his dog, under a cover which he had brought with him. There they rested, the man and the beast warming their bodies against each other, and still frozen to the marrow. Ulrich could not sleep. His mind was full of visions, and his body was shaking with cold. The day was breaking when he rose, his legs stiff as iron, his mind filled with anxiety, his heart beating so loudly that he imagined he heard noises all about him. Suddenly he felt as if he should die of cold in this solitude, and the horror of this thought aroused his energy and re-awakened his vigour. He hurried toward the inn, followed by Sam, limping on three legs.

It was four o'clock when they reached Schwarenbach. The house was empty and cold. Ulrich made a fire, ate, and fell asleep—so exhausted that he could not keep awake. He slept a long time—a heavy sleep. Suddenly a voice, a cry, a name, disturbed his slumbers. "Ulrich," it called. Was he dreaming? or was it one of those uncanny sounds which come to those who are losing their minds? No—he listened intently—this shrill cry came through his ears—and penetrated his whole being, to the very end of his nervous finger-tips. Certainly, it had called him, "Ulrich"—it was near the house—he could no longer doubt it. Opening the door, he shouted "Gaspard!" with all the strength of his lungs. No reply, no sound, no murmur, nothing. It was night. The wind had risen, the icy wind which leaves no living thing on these frozen, abandoned heights. It blew in gusts, more deadly and destructive than the hot winds of the desert. Ulrich called again, "Gaspard! Gaspard! Gaspard!" All remained silent on the mountain.

With one bound he re-entered the inn, shut the door, pulled in the blinds, and fell trembling on a chair, certain that his friend had called to him as his soul was leaving his body. He was as sure of this as he was that he lived and breathed.

It had cried its last farewell, its last reproach, its last malediction, to the man who had not hunted until he found his friend—and Ulrich found that it was there—near him, behind the wall, outside the door, which he had just closed. It roved and hovered about like a bird which flutters its wings against a lighted window. The young man was filled with horror. He wanted to escape, and yet he dared not move. The spirit was ever present, day and night, while the body of the old man lay unburied in consecrated ground.

With the return of the sun Kunsi gained a little assurance. He prepared his own breakfast, and made some soup for the dog—then he sank inertly into a chair, his heart tortured at the thought of Gaspard out there in the cold. When night came new terrors again seized him. He walked up and down the dimly-lighted kitchen, pacing from one end to the other of the room, listening for the cry which should break this silence. He felt so alone, this poor miserable man!—more alone!—more alone than any man had ever been, alone in this white desert of snow, alone two thousand metres from human beings, from the life that burns and palpitates—alone in the frozen sky!

An insane desire filled him to go somewhere, no matter where, no matter how; to go to Loëche—throwing himself down the abyss; but he did not even venture to open the door, certain that the other, the dead man, would block his way.

Toward midnight, weary with walking, filled with anxiety and fear, he threw himself on his chair, for he dreaded his bed, as one dreads a haunted spot. All at once, the shrill cry which he had heard the other night filled his ears. So piercing was the sound that Ulrich put his arms out to repulse the unseen form, and with such force that he fell over, chair and all. Sam, wakened by the unusual noise, began to whine, as frightened dogs whine, and turned and looked all about the inn to see where the danger came from—smelling under the door, snorting and breathing very loud, his hair bristling, and his tail between his legs; he kept on growling.

Kunsi meanwhile had risen, and, holding his chair in his hand, said, "Do not enter; if you do, I will kill you!"—and the dog, excited by this means, barked furiously at the invisible enemy who defied his master's voice.

Sam little by little grew calmer, and came and lay down by the fire; but he was nervous and restless still, and growled low between his teeth. Ulrich, in his turn, regained his senses, but, feeling weak, he looked for a bottle of brandy in the buffet, and rapidly drank several glasses. His thoughts became vague, his courage left him, and a burning fever filled his veins. The next day he ate nothing, living wholly on alcohol, and for several days he remained drunk as a beast. The moment he thought of Gaspard Hari he drank until he fell on the floor intoxicated.

When the effects of the alcohol wore off and he had digested the heating and feverish liquid, the same cry, "Ulrich!" would pierce his brain. He sat up, rose tottering, stretching out his hands for support, calling Sam to help him.

In three weeks he had consumed all the alcohol he possessed, and this continued drunkenness only increased his fear, which grew more and more intense. The fixed idea, exaggerated by a month of idleness, grew and penetrated his very being. He walked up and down the Inn like a wild animal in a cage—occasionally putting his ear to the door to listen if Gaspard was there, and defying him through the wall. No sooner would he fall asleep than the voice would rouse him, and he would jump with a bound to his feet. At last, one night he gained some courage, and with a slow, cowardly step, he stole to the door and opened it.

Shivering, he threw some wood on the fire, and sat down to warm himself. He started—someone had hit the door. He called out, "Go away!" and a long and plaintive cry answered him. Ulrich's few remaining senses deserted him, and he was paralysed with fear, turning round and round to find some corner in which to hide himself. The dog, wandering about outside the house, moaned constantly, and scratched with his paws the woodwork.

Ulrich lifted the heavy wooden buffet, which was filled with dishes, and with superhuman force put it against the door as a barricade, and piling up everything that was left, the mattress, the chairs, the bench, he blocked up the windows as if for a siege. The dog gave long, low groans, to which the young man replied with similar sounds. Days and nights passed in this way, the one outside pawing and biting the wall, and growling low; the one inside following all his movements, his ear against the wall, and replying to his moans by dreadful inhuman cries.

At last Ulrich heard no sound, and he lay down, so exhausted that he slept. When he awoke, he could remember nothing.

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The long winter was over, and the Hauser family prepared to go up again to the little Inn.

As they approached the mountain-top, the two women on their mule talked of the two men whom they were to find there, and wondered that one of them had not come to meet them, as the pass had been open for several days. Soon they saw the house covered with snow. The doors and windows were closed. A little smoke came from the chimney, reassuring Father Hauser. But as they drew nearer, they saw on the door sill the skeleton of an animal, the flesh having been picked from the bones by some wild birds. All examined it. "It is Sam," said the mother, and she called, "Gaspard!" A cry answered from the house, a piercing, wild cry, which sounded like the call of some tortured animal. Father Hauser repeated "Gaspard!"

The three men tried to open the door. It would not move. They got from the stable a long beam, which they used for a ram. With all their might they forced open the door. The wood cracked, the panels broke in many pieces, then a loud noise filled the house, and they discovered, curled up behind the buffet, a man. He had long white hair, which fell on his shoulders, a shaggy white beard, and his clothes hung on his thin body in rags. No one recognised him until Louise Hauser said, her voice trembling, "*Maman*, it is Ulrich," and they all agreed that it was he, although his hair was white. They went in, touched him, asked him questions, but he answered not a word, and they carried him to Loëche, where the doctor pronounced him insane. No one ever knew what became of old Gaspard. The little Louise died that summer of a malady which the doctor attributed to the cold air of the mountain top.

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THE OUTLAWS OF THE AIR.

By George Griffith,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," &c.

SUMMARY OF PROLOGUE AND CHAPTERS I. & II.

Max Renault, the leading spirit of the Anarchist "Autonomie Group No. 7," meets his colleagues in a club near the Caledonian Road on the eve of President Carnot's assassination. He shoots a traitor who has almost betrayed the Group and so saved Carnot's life. Then he tells them that he is about to emigrate with a society of Socialists, one of whom, Frederick Austen, a wealthy engineer who has been converted to Socialism, takes out with him a working model of an aerial vessel which is to enable the colonists to enforce a reign of peace on earth. This air-ship Renault determines to steal when complete, and use for the purpose of bringing about an Anarchist reign of terror instead. Meanwhile, Franz Hartog, another member of the Group, is to carry out a plot he has formed to steal a very fast torpedo boat destroyer, which is to be built at Elbing for the Russian Government, and, with her, to levy blackmail on the Atlantic, and so raise funds to build an Anarchist aerial fleet when the time comes.

On Christmas Day, 1898, the *Calypso*, a steam yacht belonging to Sir Harry Milton, a young and wealthy landowner, having been disabled in a gale and then becalmed, sights an island in the South Pacific, from which an electric launch, the *Mermaid*, puts off and tows the yacht in. Frank Markham, in command of the launch, tells Sir Harry, with whom are travelling his sister, Violet, and Herbert Wyndham, a lieutenant in the British Navy, on sick leave, that the island is Utopia, a Socialist colony, founded some three years before by emigrants from England.

CHAPTER III.

OLD FRIENDS AND NEW.

As the *Mermaid* came alongside in obedience to a hail from Markham the gangway steps were lowered, and Violet, Sir Harry, Lieutenant Wyndham and the young Utopian went on board the launch leaving the sailing master to see the *Calypso* into dock.

Under the forward awning the introductions were repeated in more formal fashion, and as Violet shook hands with the Utopian girls, which she did with mingled feelings of slightly strained propriety and irrepressible admiration, she said, with a laugh:

"I see that in Utopia, at any rate, the vexed question of rational dress has been satisfactorily settled."

She spoke almost in an undertone, but her brother caught her words, and exclaimed with more enthusiasm than discretion:

"Settled, I should think so! It's a perfect triumph of art and convenience over Mrs. Grundy and conventionalism. I hope you'll take some patterns home with you, Violet."

His sister stole a sidelong glance, not at him, it must be confessed, but at Lieutenant Wyndham, and said, with just the faintest possible flush on her pretty cheeks:

"Oh, of course, it would be delightful, but—I am afraid you are forgetting the difference in climate. Miss Dora, here, for instance, looks entirely irresistible in Utopia at Christmas, but for her own sake I should be very sorry to see her shivering in the Park in the severity of the British June."

"I should think so," said Dora also, with the faintest suspicion of a blush and a smile, that made Sir Harry wonder why he had never seen as pretty a girl as this in England. "Why, quite apart from the shivers, which would be uncomfortable enough, the people would think that I was one of the girls out of 'Utopia Limited,' trying a new sort of advertisement, and then, I suppose, some one would call a policeman and give me in charge for outraging public decency."

"Very probably," chimed in Wyndham drily, "and the first to do it would be one of the women who go to a dance or a theatre, well——"

"Thanks, Lieutenant Wyndham," almost snapped Violet, this time blushing in real earnest. "You seem to forget the last time that you and Harry took *me* to the theatre. Suppose we change the subject. I ought to have known better than raise such a purely feminine question in the presence of unregenerate males. No, don't apologise I deserve what I got. If you say another word I won't speak to you for the rest of the day."

Anywhere else a certain amount of awkwardness might have followed this little scene, but Dora promptly came to the rescue by saying very demurely:

"Well, it's only about three years since we left England, and I have not forgotten the weather yet. I don't think there can be any more comparison between your dress and ours than between the British climate and this one. At any rate I can promise that when you have succeeded in reforming your climate, we girls of Utopia will form a mission and go and try and reform your dress."

By the time the laugh that followed this sally had died away, the *Mermaid* had run alongside a jetty which ran out from a platform of rock at the head of the basin and was made fast.

"Why, bless my soul! surely that can't be Mr. Austen—and yet I'll be hanged if it isn't either him or his double. How do you do, sir? Who on earth would have dreamt of finding *you* in Utopia!"

By the time he had uttered the last words of his somewhat disjointed exclamation Sir Harry had cleared the gangway between the *Mermaid* and the jetty with a couple of strides and was shaking hands with a man of spare figure and medium height, with a keen, intellectual, clean-shaven face and close-cropped grey hair, who was standing on the jetty, forming a somewhat commonplace contrast in his easy-fitting brown holland Norfolk jacket and trousers and grey solar topee to the picturesquely-clad little group about him.

"How do you do, sir?"

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"And equally who in Utopia would have dreamt of having the pleasure of wishing a merry Christmas in the Southern tropics to Sir Harry Milton and his charming sister?" said the old gentleman, returning the Baronet's grip with equal heartiness, and then letting go his hand to hold his own out to Violet, whom Lieutenant Wyndham had just handed ashore.

"For such pleasure as there is in that, Mr. Austen, you must thank a combination of good and bad fortune, which has brought us out of the matter-of-fact world that we sailed from into—well into some realm of romance which really doesn't seem as though it were on the surface of the same planet," said Violet, in response to his greeting.

"This has really been a morning of wonders for us, and, finding you here after your mysterious disappearance from London, is certainly the greatest wonder of all. I can tell you I feel even more than the usual feminine curiosity to know how it has all come about. For my own part I feel something like Alice in Wonderland, only the Wonderland is a very much nicer one"

"And all the wonders shall be explained in due course as far as I can explain them, I can assure you," said Mr. Austen; "but our first duty is to make you feel a little bit at home in Wonderland, so you must come and be introduced to some of its inhabitants. Me, you know already, and you seem to have made friends with the *Mermaids* too. This is Edward Adams, who would be first President of Utopia if we had any Government or politics, which I thank Heaven we have not. He is the man who conceived the ideal of which Utopia is the realisation."

As he said this he presented her with a gesture which included her brother in the introduction to a tall, well-built, grave-faced man of about thirty-five, with crisp curling brown hair and a blond close-clipped beard and drooping moustache which was not quite thick enough to conceal the gravely-pleasant smile with which he bade them welcome to Utopia.

"And this is Max Renault, our chief engineer and electrician, to whose genius the existence of the *Mermaid* is due," continued Mr. Austen presenting the man whose acquaintance the reader has already made under such different circumstances. Like Adams, he was dressed in the Utopian costume; but distinguished and even handsome as he looked in it, Violet somehow found herself unable to return his readily offered handclasp as heartily as she had returned those of Adams and Mr. Austen. The man seemed to her to have a reserved or rather a concealed power about him which to her woman's swift intuition seemed to strike her with a vague sense of deceit. When Lieutenant Wyndham was presented to him, after being introduced to Mr. Austen, he looked at him keenly for a moment and then said:

"I'm afraid I can't claim the pleasure of your previous acquaintance, Mr. Renault, but somehow your face seems familiar to me."

"It is quite possible that it is sufficiently commonplace for you to mistake me for someone else," replied Renault, with a smiling politeness that contrasted but ill with the vision of recollection that flitted before his mind's eye as he shook Wyndham's hand.

"And now," said Mr. Austen, when the introductions had been completed, "if you like we'll have a turn round the dockyard while they are getting your yacht on the slips, and then we can go on board the *Mermaid* again and run round to the settlement and get some lunch and find you quarters."

During the inspection of the dockyard, which occupied the next hour or two, both Sir Harry and Lieutenant Wyndham were amazed to see how much had been done in the three years that they were told the Utopians had spent upon the island.

There were three basins, partly natural and partly artificial, which had been fitted with sluice-gates moved by hydraulic power, the largest of which, the one the *Calypso* was being put into, would have taken a vessel twice her size, while the other two would amply have accommodated a craft of three-hundred tons.

On the opposite side of the main basin, on a rocky plateau about thirty feet above the water, there were two blast furnaces of the newest design in full operation, and water-power engines, actuated by penstocks and turbines under a five-hundred foot head of water, were running a plant of machinery capable of performing all the processes of steel ship-building, and were also operating a powerful installation for the extraction of aluminium from earths and clay by what seemed to be a highly improved and very economical process of electrolysis.

"This is Edward Adams."

From the interior of a large oblong wooden shed, that stood on a plain of rock sloping at an angle of about fifteen degrees down to the water's edge, came the sound of hammering, drilling, and rolling, which told the lieutenant's practiced ear that some vessel, probably the three thousand ton forty-knot cruiser of which Markham had spoken, was being constructed within it.

He would dearly have liked to have been admitted within the enclosure to see what manner of naval marvel it concealed, but good manners and his recollection of the pledge Sir Harry had given compelled him to possess his soul with patience and hope for a future invitation. None was given, however, for Mr. Austen, on passing the shed, merely nodded towards it, and said:

"We are trying an experiment in ship-building in there. Perhaps Markham may have told you of it, but as it isn't in a fit state for criticism yet, and as we're not quite sure about its ultimate success, I'm afraid I can't ask you to go and look at it."

After that, of course, nothing could be said on the subject by any of the visitors. By the time they had seen what they were shown at the dockyard the *Calypso* was safely shored up in the dry-dock, and the hydraulic pumps were throwing the water in tons into the outer basin, and then, after Sir Harry had told the sailing master not to allow any of the crew to leave her until he received word from him, the party went on board the *Mermaid* again and were soon speeding across the green waters of the lagoon to the settlement.

Then more introductions were gone through, everyone according a simply-worded and yet hearty welcome to the voyagers, and then Mr. Austen, insisting on the privilege on the ground of old acquaintance, carried off Violet, Sir Harry, and Lieutenant Wyndham to his house to lunch. Adams and Renault excused themselves from joining the party, saying that they would have plenty to talk about at first without them, but promised to come and smoke a pipe on the verandah after lunch and hear all the news from the outer world.

During the meal the host did nearly all the talking in satisfying the curiosity of his guests as to the origin of Utopia, and the reason for his own presence in the colony. He told them in a simple circumstantial narrative how the death of his son had led him to become a member of the "Brotherhood of the Better Life," and how the change in his social views together with his determination to retire from the business that had brought him into commercial relations which ended in friendship with Sir Harry's father, and devote the whole of his fortune,

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amounting to over half a million, to the practical development of the scheme which he had heard Edward Adams propound at one of the meetings; how they had bought a steamer, loaded her with everything that could be of use in the new colony, from a spade to the elaborate machinery they had seen working at the dockyard, and had brought out the first party of five hundred colonists to this island, which had been discovered twenty years before by one of the members of the Brotherhood, named Ambrose Miller, an old salt who had been captain of a South Sea whaler.

Then he went on to tell how the colonists prospered exceedingly during their first year in their island paradise, how they had escaped the fate of all similar ventures by rigorously excluding everything that savoured of politics and political economy from the primitive and purely domestic system which alone existed on the island, and how at the end of a year they had sent the steamer back to England with invitations to the best of their friends and kindred to come and join them at any rate for a year's visit on trial; and, lastly, how, at the end of that year every man, woman, and child of the six hundred souls who had accepted the invitation elected to renounce for ever the world that they had left, and become citizens of Utopia.

"So far," said Mr. Austen, bringing his story to an end, "the experiment has been a distinct and undeniable success, and that, I think, is chiefly due to the fact that we have only tried to make ourselves comfortable, and have not played the fool with constitutions or theories of government. We are simply a collection of about two hundred families, each perfectly independent of all the others, and only acting with them where common interest prompts them. As a matter of fact, we get on very well together, and the one law that we have all solemnly agreed to effectually prevents any unpleasantness arising from personal ill-nature."

"For pity's sake, tell us what it is—we want a law like that *so* badly in London!" broke in Violet, in a tone of eloquent mock entreaty.

"With pleasure," smiled Mr. Austen in reply, "though I'm afraid English society is too hopelessly complicated to allow of its application. It is simply this: If any Utopian of responsible years meddles with the personal or domestic concerns of any other in word or deed, he or she is to be at once turned out of the colony and banished for a year to a small islet about four miles off the eastern coast. A second offence would mean being set adrift in a boat with a month's provisions outside the reef and being forbidden to return on pain of death."

"Capital!" exclaimed Sir Harry. "What havoc a law like that would make with some of our most cherished institutions. Has it ever been put in force?"

"No," said Mr. Austen smiling and slowly shaking his head, "and I don't think it ever will be. We are too busy in Utopia to be busybodies. But here are Adams and Renault, and you must get your news ready."

"And especially the news of this mysterious nineteenth century pirate with no name and a red flag that Markham has been telling us about," said Renault, stepping in from the verandah as he spoke.

Settled themselves in their easy lean-back chairs.

CHAPTER IV.

THE STORY OF THE RED PIRATE.

"LIEUTENANT WYNDHAM is the freshest of the party as far as news is concerned," said Sir Harry, when they had settled themselves in their easy lean-back chairs on the verandah and had lighted their pipes charged with fragrant Utopian-grown tobacco, "and added to that, there's just a chance he may let some naval state secret out in the course of his yarn, and that will make it all the more interesting."

"I don't know any naval state secrets," laughed Wyndham, in reply, "and therefore I can't tell any. The British Admiralty doesn't communicate its official secrets to lieutenants of British gun-boats. Of course, if you happen to be an officer in the German Navy with a handle to your name, and the favour of the Kaiser behind you, it is a very different matter. However, that's not the story.

"The story itself," he continued, settling himself in his chair and blowing a long contemplative whiff of smoke up towards the verandah roof, with all the air of a man who knows how not to spoil an interesting story by an undue plunge *in medias res*, "is something so strange and unheard-of that when the news was first published from some unknown source of information in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, it was received with about as much incredulity as you'll remember the *Pall Mall's* story about the retirement of Mr. Gladstone was, but I'm sorry to say it proved every bit as true as the other.

"To begin at the beginning. You remember that about five years ago the British Admiralty, in some queer freak of common sense and patriotism, gave orders for the construction of a flotilla of forty-two torpedo boat destroyers, and bargained for a speed of twenty-seven knots.

"The first of these boats was the *Havock*, and the second was the *Hornet*, both built by Yarrow. The *Havock* did a trifle over twenty-seven knots, and the *Hornet* a bit over twenty-eight. This put the Russian Government on their mettle, and, as it is considered good business, and correct commercial patriotism for loyal British firms to sell the deadliest possible weapons to our likeliest enemy, there was no objection to the builders of the *Havock* and the *Hornet* undertaking to build a twenty-nine knot boat for the Tsar.

"Then, no sooner had the order been given than Thornycroft, of Chiswick, who, by the way, has said that if the money was forthcoming he could build a boat that would do forty knots, went one better, and, in June '94, turned out the *Daring*, which astounded everybody by doing twenty-nine and a quarter knots over the measured mile at Maplin. This, of course, woke Yarrow's people up like a shot, and they turned out the Tsar's boat, and rushed her over the measured mile three times running in a shade under two minutes, and that of course meant a speed of nearly thirty-one knots an hour.

"We all thought the limit had been reached, at any rate, for some time, but six months later, that is to say towards the middle of '95, Thornycroft turned out the still celebrated *Ariel*, which knocked all the other records into a cocked hat by running the mile twice each way in less than a minute and fifty seconds. The average speed worked out at thirty-three knots an hour, and common consent seemed to take this as the maximum.

"The *Ariel* remained unbeaten until the *Pall Mall Gazette* startled the world in the beginning of April last by publishing the news that Schichau, the crack torpedo boat builder of the Continent, had built a destroyer for the Tsar with a guaranteed speed of thirty-six knots an hour, engined on quite

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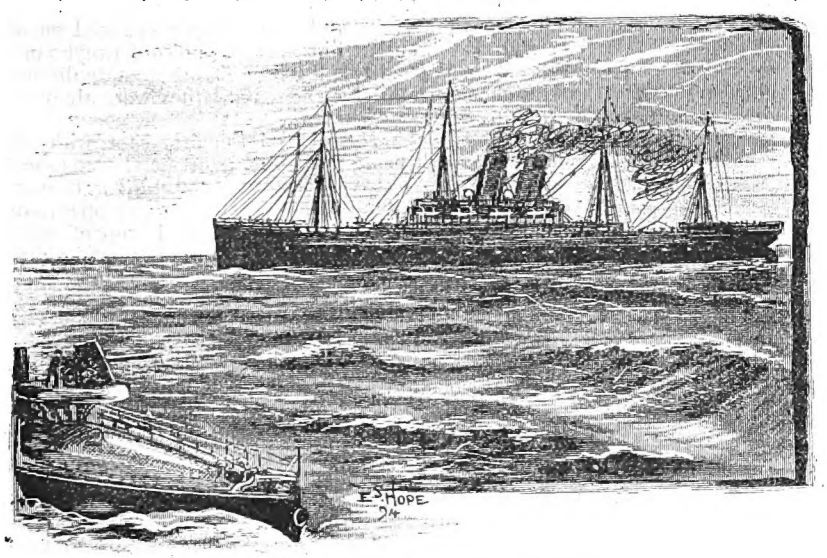


"The 'Alberta' had been stopped in mid-Atlantic."

a new principle by a German engineering genius called Franz Hartog, and that she had gone out for a trial run on the Baltic and had just vanished into space, taking Hartog among others with her.

"All sorts of speculations of course began to fly about as soon as it became impossible to keep the affair secret, and the *Pall Mall's* story was confirmed by the German press. Some people said that she must have run full tilt in to a rock or a sand bank and gone down with all hands; some said that they had tried to over-drive her and had blown her up, and this certainly seemed the most feasible explanation. Some again said that she must have been stolen by the Nihilists, but this was laughed at as impossible.

"For all that, however, it turned out to be very much nearer the truth than any of the other guesses. Four nights after she disappeared, the lieutenant in command of a Danish torpedo-boat coming through the Sound from Copenhagen to Kronborg went ashore as soon as he got into port, and stated that a grey painted boat about the size of the missing destroyer, that's to say, about two hundred feet long, had passed him during the night at a tremendous speed with no flame or sparks coming from her funnels.

"He said that his own boat was travelling over twenty knots at the time, and yet the unknown vessel ran away from it as though he had been standing still. This, combined with the fact that she showed no lights, certainly made it look as though she had really been the runaway. The lieutenant's story leaked out, and of course the papers jumped at it, and then they seemed to plunge into a contest of invention to see which could get the wildest and most ridiculous answer to the problem: What had become of the lost destroyer?

"I don't know whether any of you remember it, but there was a highly imaginative book published, I think, in the early part of '94, the author of which put a most curious combination of buccaneer and sentimentalist on board an equally curious cruiser worked by gas engines which stopped at the most critical moment for want of oil, and brought her piratical raidings on the Atlantic to a timely but ignominious end.

"Well, the general belief was that those who had stolen the lost destroyer had done so with the intention of emulating this gentleman's exploits in a really practical fashion, for I ought to have told you that the boat, with that excess of technical detail which the Germans sometimes indulge in, had been sent to sea for her trial fully equipped in fuel, stores, arms, and ammunition, just exactly as though she'd been going straight into a fight.

"Affairs were rather strained just then between Russia and England, in consequence of the old row about Korea, and there was a rumour that the Russian Government had requested this to be done in case of emergencies.

"A little over a month passed, and nothing more was heard of her. The rumours were beginning to die away and give place to fresh sensations when, like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky, came the news that the *Alberta*, one of the new fast Canadian line from Halifax to Liverpool had been stopped in mid-Atlantic by a long wicked-looking grey painted vessel, with a turtle-back deck for'ard, three funnels and one mast, and flying a plain blood red flag from a flagstaff astern, and plundered of every ounce of specie, and all the portable valuables that she carried. The *Alberta* brought the news herself, and so there was no doubt about its truth.

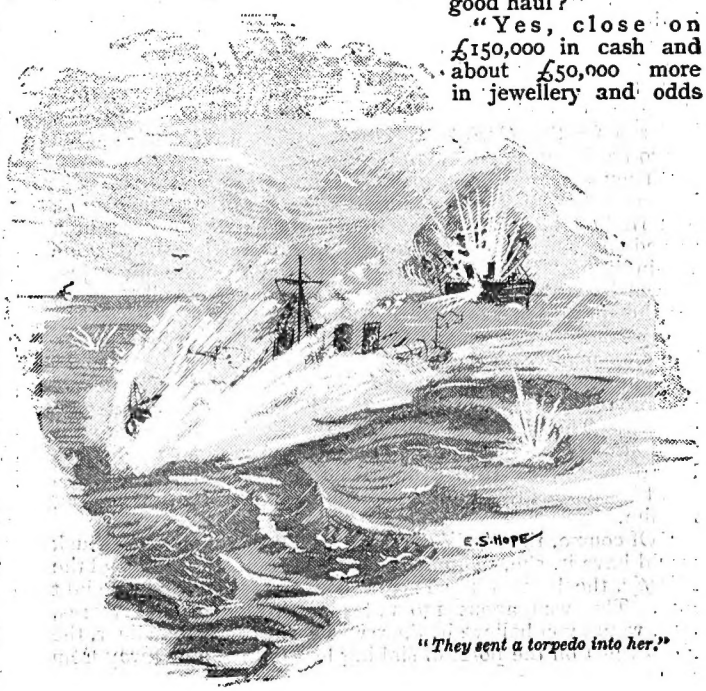
"The pirate, for he couldn't have been anything else, came up at day-break one morning at what the captain of the liner described as a perfectly incredible speed, fired a six-pound shot through her bows, and then ordered her to stop under pain of being torpedoed. Then a small launch put off, a dozen men, armed to the teeth, boarded the liner, while the *Destroyer*, as they called the stranger for want of a better name, lay to and covered her with her machine guns and a couple of torpedo tubes ready for action.

"Of course the skipper of the *Alberta* could do nothing but submit. He had nearly a thousand people on board, and there was no mistaking that the pirate meant business. Resistance would have meant being blown out of the water in five minutes, so there was nothing for it but to make the best of a bad job.

"No one was hurt except a Yankee, who got blustering with a revolver, and he was shot. When the looting was over, the pirates went off in high good humour, leaving a message that in future all mail-boats crossing the Atlantic would have to pay toll to the Red Flag."

"Very neatly done, blackguardly and all as the robbery was of course!" said Renault, as the Lieutenant paused for a minute to relight his pipe, which had gone out for lack of attention during the narrative. "I suppose they got a pretty good haul?"

"Yes, close on £150,000 in cash and about £50,000 more in jewellery and odds



"They sent a torpedo into her."

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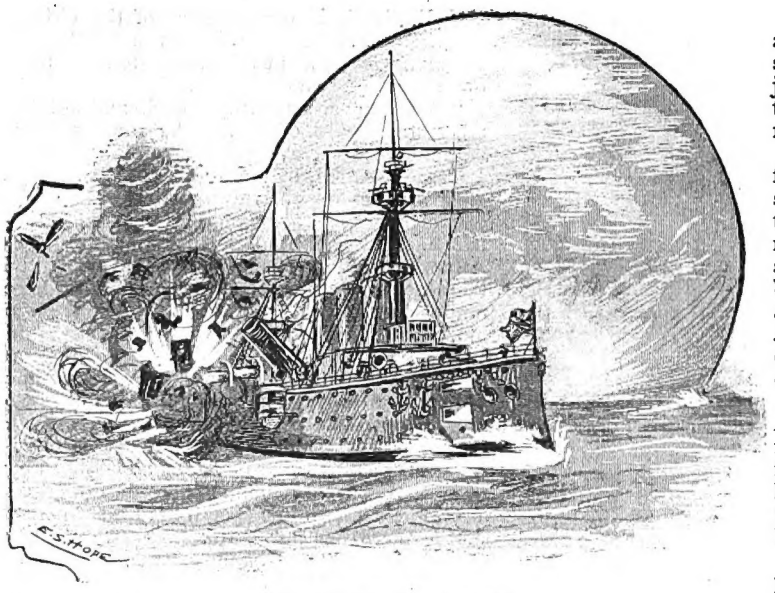

"Literally blew her stern off."

and ends. Not a bad morning's work, I must confess, even for a quite up-to-date pirate," replied Wyndham, noticing with some curiosity a faint flush that deepened the bronze of Renault's cheek as he spoke.

"I suppose an outrage like that produced a tremendous excitement as soon as the news was known?" said Adams, who had been following the story with the most intense interest.

"Sensation! I should think it did," said Wyndham, with a short laugh. "The newspapers raised a howl that you might have heard almost here. Politics and divorce were discounted to nothing in the way of interest, while broadsides of questions were fired into the First Lord of the Admiralty. Standing Orders were suspended to discuss the pirate, and even the Admiralty itself began to wake up and rub its eyes, and wonder what the deuce it was all about when, five days later, a much more terrible story was brought to Plymouth.

"The American liner *New York* had been stopped in mid-Atlantic, just as the *Alberta* had been, and while the usual looting was going on, an American gun-boat, the *Albany*, appeared on the scene, and the *New York* signalled for assistance. The pirates that had boarded her opened fire with their magazine carbines, and cleared the decks, then they got into their launch as fast as the Lord would let them, and ran for the *Destroyer*, which, by the way, really turned out to be the proper name of the pirate.

"They were no sooner on board than they opened fire with half a dozen quick firing guns, and a lot of machine guns, and riddled the *New York* like a sieve; then they sent a torpedo into her, and blew her up just as the gun-boat came within range. She opened fire right away, but she might just as well have shot at an express train a couple of miles away, for the pirate spun round on his heel, clapped on full speed, and went away, as one of the officers of the *Albany* put it, like a locomotive on the loose.

"The gun-boat saved about half of the *New York's* people and brought them into Plymouth. Then the row began in good earnest. The pirate had outraged the British lion, and, as it were, fired point-blank in the face of the American Eagle. In less than a week British and American cruisers, gun-boats, and torpedo-destroyers were swarming on the Atlantic looking for him.

"Of course, the *Ariel* was foremost in the hunt, and as luck would have it, she, in company with the cruiser *Medea* and the *Firefly*, the best of the Yarrow boats, was the first to sight him. This was about 150 miles north-west of the Azores, and, would you believe it, there was a North German liner, the *Lahn*, just on the point of sinking less than a mile away from him

"He was only about five miles ahead of our boats, and so the *Ariel* and the *Firefly* cracked on all steam and went at him like a couple of greyhounds just slipped from the leash. The brute actually had the cheek to wait for them until they were almost in range.

"Just as the *Ariel* fired the first shot with her forward quick-firing twelve-pounder, he slewed round, slipped like a streak of greased lightning through the water for about five hundred yards, stopped, and returned the shot. The *Ariel's* shell dropped about six hundred yards astern of him, and his burst squarely between her and the *Firefly*. Then he rushed away again on a wide curve trending round to the old *Medea*, who might as well have been motionless as doing the sixteen knots that was all they could grind out of her.

"My cousin, Charlie Curzon, who was on board the *Ariel*, and who told me the story, said the excitement for the next half hour or so was something indescribable. The two boats dashed at him to head him off, the *Ariel* doing all her thirty-three knots and the *Firefly* a good thirty-two, but they were just too late.

"The fellow tore through the water—incredible as you may think it—at a speed that must have been very nearly forty knots an hour. In fact, Charlie told me they could see nothing but a cloud of spray with the boat's nose in front of it and her red flag showing through the after part of it. Do what they could they couldn't stop him getting the *Medea* between them and him.

"This forced them to separate. As they did so the *Medea* opened fire and blazed away like a floating volcano, but it wasn't a bit of good, they no sooner got the range than they lost it again, the brute was moving at such a frightful speed. He ran up to within a mile of her, stopped dead, spun round on his heel, fired his two stern torpedoes at her, and away he went again, sending the spray flying thirty feet into the air on each side of him.

"One torpedo missed, but I'm sorry to say the other took the old *Medea* under the quarter, and literally blew her stern off. The *Firefly* stood by to give what assistance she could, and the *Ariel* took up the chase again, with every ounce of steam her boilers would stand. From what Charlie said, she might just as well have tried to chase the Flying Dutchman.

"She stuck to it the whole afternoon, and in six hours travelled over two hundred miles to the north-west—but all that her crew ever saw was that cloud of foam away ahead of them, always getting smaller and smaller, and at last night and a fog came on together, and it faded away into the darkness and the mist and they lost sight of it.

"That," said the lieutenant, knocking the ashes out of his second pipe, "is the last that I heard at first hand of the pirate with the red flag, for the day after Charlie told me the story I was ordered out to the West Coast. That was nearly nine months ago, and, from the accounts we saw in the Australian papers, which you will be able to read at your leisure, he is still at large, looting a liner every now and then, as the fancy takes him, and laughing at every attempt to catch him."

"Then, if no one else can catch him, we will!" said Mr. Austen, almost passionately, rising from his chair with a flush of anger on his thin cheeks. "It is an outrage on humanity and civilisation that such things should be! I'm afraid we must give him three months' more license, but, after that, we'll hunt him down and sink him, if we have to chase him round the world to do it! Renault, we must have the *Nautilus* afloat in three weeks!"

(To be continued next week.)

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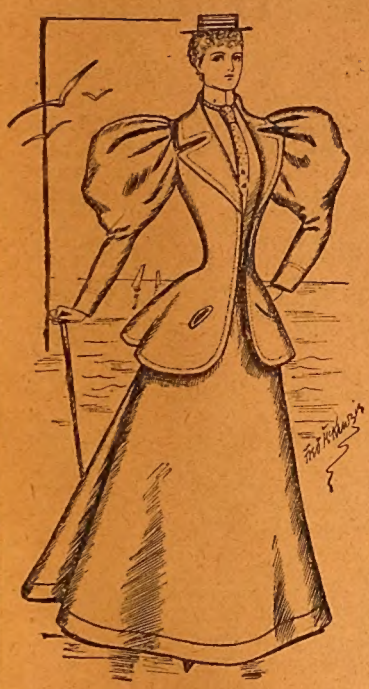

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	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s d.	£ s. d.
21	3 1 6	8 1 4	3 12 0	4 9 4
25	3 4 10	8 16 4	3 16 0	5 0 4
30	3 10 4	10 0 4	4 0 0	6 0 4
35	3 17 6	11 9 4	4 12 0	6 17 4
40	4 6 4	13 6 4	5 0 0	8 6 4
45	5 1 10	15 13 8	6 0 0	9 13 8
49	6 12 10	18 3 4	7 16 0	10 7 4

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